



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

# Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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For Immediate Release

Thursday, June 19, 2003

Grassley Expresses Concern Over Egypt's Position on Ag Biotech Case

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today expressed concern over reports that Egypt is considering not participating in the challenge at the World Trade Organization against the European Union's moratorium on agricultural biotechnology products. Grassley's letter to the Egyptian minister of foreign affairs follows.

June 19, 2003

The Honorable Ahmed Maher  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Arab Republic of Egypt  
3521 International Court, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Minister Maher:

I enjoyed getting to know you when you served as Ambassador of Egypt to the United States. I appreciated the time you spent in Iowa, and your interactions with Iowans certainly helped to further build goodwill between our people. I look forward to continued close ties between Iowa and Egypt with this year's visit of Ambassador Nabil Fahmy to Iowa.

I consider myself a friend of Egypt. In part for this reason, I generally support negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between our countries. If done correctly, an FTA would benefit Egyptians as well as Americans. One of the criteria that ought to be used to determine with whom the United States negotiates future FTAs is whether a country shares the same vision of the global trading system as does the United States. I certainly would like to be able to include Egypt in that camp.

I am concerned by reports that Egypt is now considering not participating in the challenge at the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the European Union's moratorium on agricultural biotechnology products. The European Union is clearly violating WTO rules as it prohibits the entry of new biotechnology products into its market although these products are entirely safe. If they were

unsafe, Iowa's farmers would not be growing them. The European Union's policies are unfair and are causing real harm to Iowa's farmers and Iowa's economy.

As you know, the failure of the European Union to adhere to science-based measures could harm the interests of Egypt. If the European Union's biotechnology policies go unchallenged, other WTO members will feel free to impose non-science based measures on agricultural and food products, including commodities grown in Egypt. Moreover, I am aware that extensive agricultural biotechnology research is being conducted in Egypt. Egypt stands to benefit from developments in biotechnology that can address the specific needs of its producers and consumers.

Given the importance of ensuring that WTO members abide by their commitments and base their food and agricultural measures upon science, I am perplexed by reports that Egypt might not take part in the WTO challenge over the European Union's biotechnology moratorium.

I would appreciate hearing from you or someone else in your government as to why Egypt is considering withdrawing its support at the WTO on an issue that is of such vital importance to the United States and Egypt.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley

cc: Ambassador Nabil Fahmy